



Monotheism and Evolution

There has been the claim by many Afrocentrics, orientalist and anthropologists that monotheism was an ancient Egyptian invention begun by the 18th dynasty Pharaoh, Akhenaten/Amenhotep the fourth, in the 14th century BCE (before common era)?¹ This assertion surprisingly comes from ‘respected’ academic elements, western professors expecting people to blindly follow their ‘evidence,’ when none has actually been presented in the first case. For example, this argument has been put forward by Julian Baldick in *Black God – The Afroasiatic Roots of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim Religions* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997).

Due to the influence of Darwinian evolutionary thought, many historians, social scientists and anthropologists have concluded that religion began with humanity worshipping the forces of nature due to their amazement at the cataclysmic and devastating effects of their environments and the natural world. Thus, thunder, lightening, earthquakes, volcanoes etc were believed to be conceived of supernatural beings. Thus, humans sought ways to appease the beings

¹ This Pharaoh later declared himself as being god on earth in any case!?

through rites, rituals, prayers and sacrifices. The native North Americans, who believe in spirits of the river and of the forest, are used as examples of this early stage in the evolution of religion, known as Animism.

Eventually *Diathesis* emerged in which all of the supernatural powers were confined in two main gods, usually a god of good and a god of evil. According to the evolutionists, an example of this stage can be seen in the religion of the Zoroastrians of Persia. Before the emergence of the Persian ‘reformer’ Zarathustra,² Persians were thought to have believed in nature spirits, clan gods and family gods. According to the evidence gathered and interpreted by anthropologists, during Zoroaster’s time tribal gods were reduced to two: *Abura Mazda* who created good and *Angora Mazda* who created evil. When tribes gave way to nations, tribal gods in turn gave way to a national god and monotheism was supposedly born. Thus, according to this view, which many Afrocentrics, social scientists, orientalist and anthropologist hold, monotheism has no divine origin. It was merely a by-product of the evolution of early man’s superstitions based on the lack of scientific knowledge.³

² In Greek, Zoroaster

³ Dr Aboon Ameenah Bilaal Philips, *Fundamentals of Tawheed – Islamic Monotheism* (International Islamic Publishing House: 1994) pp.183-190

The distinguished scholar of Hadeeth Shaykh Naasiruddeen al-Albaanee (*raheemahullaah*)⁴ stated **“it is established in Islaam and the *Sharee’ah* that mankind in the beginning was a single nation upon true *Tawheed* then *Shirk* gradually overcame them. The basis for this is the saying of Allaah,**

***Mankind was one Ummah then Allah sent the Prophets as
bringers of good tidings and warners***

{*al-Baqarah* (2): 213}

Ibn Abbaas⁵, *may Allaah be pleased with him*, said *“between Prophet Nooh (Noah) and Aadam, peace be upon them both, were ten generations, all of them were upon the Sharee’ah of truth, but then they differed. So Allaah sent Prophets to bring good news and also warn their people.”*

⁴ He was born in Albania but grew up in Syria where he became one of the main Islamic scholars and is noted for being the leading scholar of hadeeth of the century and one of the revivers of the religion of Islaam. He taught for some time at the *Madeenah Islamic University* and dedicated many of his books to the university library. He compiled landmark research on hadeeth such as *Silsilah al-Hadeeth as-Saheehah* and *ad-Da’eefah*. He also authored *Tahdheer as-Saajid*, *at-Tawassul*, *Fiqh ul-Waaqi’ee* etc.

⁵ ‘Abdullaah ibn Abbaas (died 68 AH/687 CE), he was the cousin of the Prophet Muhammad and one of the most eminent scholars of the Qur’aan amongst the companions. He was thus known as *Turjumaan ul-Qur’aan* (The Commentator of the Qur’aan) and was also a prominent jurist and hadeeth scholar. His comments of the Qur’aan form part of all the commentaries on the Qur’aan. However, many comments attributed to him are not authentic. The so-called ‘*Commentary of Ibn Abbaas*’ compiled by Aboo Taahir Muhammad ibn Ya’qoob al-Fayroozabaadee is not his work.

Shaykh al-Albaanee then went on to say that this refutes the philosophers and atheists who claim that the natural basis of man is *Shirk*,⁶ and that *Tawheed* evolved in man! The preceding *Aayah* refutes this claim as do the following authentic hadeeth.

The Prophet Muhammad (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) related from Allaah, that Allaah said, *“I created all my servants upon the true religion (Tawheed free from Shirk), then the devils came to them and led them astray from their true religion. They made unlawful to people that which I had made lawful for them, and they commanded them to associate in worship with Me that for which I had sent down no authority.”*⁷ Also Muhammad (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) sated that, *“Every child is born upon the Fitrah but the parents make them into a Jew or a Christian or a Magian”*⁸.

Shaykh al-Albaanee then goes on to state that **“after this clear explanation, it is important for the Muslims to know how *Shirk* spread amongst the believers after they were *Muwahhideen*. Concerning the saying of Allaah, *Most Perfect*, about Nooh**

⁶ *Shirk* is directing worship to others besides Allaah, it includes idol-worship, saint-worship and the idolatry of superstitions, palm-reading, tea leaf reading, crystal ball gazing, sorcery, magic, divination, claiming to know unseen realms of existence etc.

⁷ A *hadeeth-qudsee* is a divinely inspired hadeeth directly from Allaah to Muhammad (*salallaahu alayhi wassallam*). This narration is related by Muslim and Ahmad from ‘Iyyaah ibn Himaar al-Mujaash’ee (*radi Allaahu anhu*).

⁸ A fire-worshipper, *Majoos* in Arabic, *Zoroastrian* in English.

And they have said “you shall not forsake your gods, nor shall you forsake Wadd, nor Suwaa’, nor Yaghooth, nor Yaa’uq nor Nasr”

{*Nooh* (71): 23}

It has been related from a group of the *Salaf*, in many narrations, that these five deities were righteous worshippers. However, when they died, *Shaytaan* (Satan) whispered to their people to sit at their graves and remember them. Then *Shaytaan* appeared in the form of a man to the next generation and told them to make statues and idols of them. Then *Shaytaan* told the later generations to worship these idols as their forefathers and ancestors did. This has also been related by Ibn Jareer at-Tabaree and others. In *ad-Durr al-Mandhoor* (6/269) ‘Abdullaah bin Humayd relates from Aboo Muttahar who said Yazeed ibnul-Muhallab was mentioned to Aboo Ja’far al-Baaqir (d.11 AH) so he said, “he was killed at the place where another besides Allaah was first worshiped.” Then he mentioned *Wadd* and said “*Wadd* was a Muslim man who was loved by his people. When he died the people began to gather around his grave in the land of Baabil (Babel, Babylon)

lamenting and mourning. Aboo Ja'far mentions that the idols were later called '*Wadd*.'

The evidence which proves that humanity's monotheistic concept of One God degenerated into idol-worship, man-worship, saint worship, and minor gods is extensive. Islam believes that humans beings started out as worshipping God alone then after deviated into various forms of polytheism as have just been mentioned. Islam holds that God sent Messengers to all the tribes and nations of the Earth to guide them back to the path of monotheism.

***We (Allaah) indeed sent to every nation Messengers (saying)
“worship Allaah and leave aside Taghoot (false deities)”***

{*an-Nahl* (16): 36}

The Islamic scholar Ibn ul-Atheer mentioned that **“The *Fitrah* is that which is innate to every human being, a pre-disposition to the true religion and if man was left upon this he would continue upon it. However, those who deviate from this do so due to following human weaknesses and blind following of others.”**¹⁰

⁹ Shaykh al-Albaanee, *Tadheer as-Saajid min Ittikhaadhil Quboor il-Masaajid*, p.101-106

¹⁰ *an-Nihaayah* (3/457)

Thus, we find amongst all of the so-called primitive tribes that have been discovered, the belief in One Supreme God. The central America Mayans believe in One God who created everything, whom they call *Itzamna*,¹¹ the *Mende* peoples of Sierra Leone in West Africa believe in One God who created the universe and spirits who they call *Ngewo*,¹² in the ancient Babylon the main deity of the city, *Marduk*,¹³ was seen as the Supreme God. In Hinduism, '*Brahman*' is the impersonal Eternal Absolute One God having no beginning and no end.¹⁴

In the Yoruba religion, followed by over 10 million people in West Africa (mainly Nigeria), there is One Supreme God, *Olorius/Olodumare* (The Lord of the Heavens). Nevertheless, modern *Yoruba* religion is characterised by a multitude of *Orisha* worship rites which thus render the religion closer to polytheism.

One of the first Western scholars to acknowledge the significance of the trend from monotheism to extreme polytheism was Stephen Langdon of Oxford. Langdon took the view that the Sumerians were the oldest historic civilisation and noted **“In my opinion the history of the oldest civilisation of man is a rapid decline from**

¹¹ John Hinnels, *Dictionary of Religions* (Penguin Books: 1884), p. 93

¹² *ibid*, p.210

¹³ *ibid*, p.204

¹⁴ *ibid*, p.68

monotheism to extreme polytheism and widespread belief in spirits. It is in a very true sense the history the fall of man.”¹⁵

Edward McCrady, writing about Indian religious observed that even the *Rig Veda* (Book 1, p.164) shows that in the early gods were regarded simply as diverse manifestations of One Single Divine Being, he stated that: **“They call him *Indra, Mythra, Varunna, Agnee* – all of these are different terms for the One Wise God.”**¹⁶

Chinese scholars of history sometimes divide their ancient period into three separate periods: first, the primal-ancient, second, the mid-ancient and thirdly, the near ancient, the first period roughly stretches from the 21st to the 12th century BCE. According to Ron Williams, who read Chinese, each of these periods possessed its own distinctive religious characteristics, and the first was clearly monotheistic. Williams also noted that: **“In this period of Chinese history, God the Supreme Ruler was One and indivisible, incapable of change, having no equal, ruling absolutely and alone over all in heaven above and in Earth beneath. He did what He willed and no power was able to hinder Him, and His will was always right.”**¹⁷

¹⁵ Stephen H. Langdon, “*Mythology of all Races*,” in *Semitic Mythology Journal* (Vol. 5, Archaeological Institute of America: 1931), p. xviii/p.18

¹⁶ Edward McCrady, “*Genesis and Pagan Cosmologies*,” [Trans. Vict. Institute; Vol. 72 (1940), p.55]

¹⁷ Ron Williams, “*Early Chinese Monotheism*,” a thesis paper presented before the *Kelvin Institute* (Toronto, 1938)

In the series journal *The Great Ages of Man*, one particular volume was published dealing with ancient China authored by Edward H. Schafer who noted: **“One of the oldest and certainly the greatest of deities was the Sky God *Ti'en*. In the very early days *Ti'en* was thought of as a great King in the sky, more magnificent than any earth bound kin. Later many viewed *Ti'en* as an impersonal dynamo, the source of energy that animated the world.”**¹⁸

Another very important work on the early monotheism of ‘primitive peoples’ is that by Wilhelm Schmidt which, though originally a voluminous work in German, was published in 1930 in a condensed English translation as a single volume. Schmidt discovered in his studies that he found the primitive cultures at the lowest cultural levels had the purer concepts of God. He noted that as one progresses from mere hunters to food gatherers, and food storers to food growers as pastoral nomads maintaining flocks, to food growers who have settled land use, and on up the scale to semi-urban communities, one finds at first a simple faith in a Supreme God who has no wife or family. According to Schmidt we find this form of belief among the Pygmies of central Africa, the south-eastern Australian Aborigines, the native Americas of north-central California, the primitive Algonquians, and to a certain extent the Koryaks and Ainu. To sum up his findings very briefly his own

¹⁸ Edward H. Schafer, “Ancient China,” in *The Great Ages of Man* (New York: Time Life, 1967) p. 58

words are: **“Going back to the most primitive people, the Pygmies of Africa of the central Australian Aborigines or the central American Indians – all have One Supreme God to whom they make their offerings...all these peoples also have short prayers...”**¹⁹

Andrew Lang noted that the **“Australian Aborigines probably have one of the most simple cultures of any people known, but they have religious concepts which are so lofty that it would be natural to explain them as a result of European influence.”**²⁰

At the time of writing Lang felt that this explanation was justified because in his environment their concept of God was seen as being the most ‘evolved’ and ‘civilised.’

Lang also mentioned that the inhabitants of the Andaman Islands, whom he considered to be at the same cultural level as the Aborigines, believed in One God, they described Him as being invisible, *Immortal*, *The Creator* of all things (except evil), *The Knower* of what is in the hearts and minds, *The One* who is angered by falsehood and wrong doing, helps those in distress or pain. Further, their concept of God was that He is *The Judge of Souls* and at some future time will preside over a great judgement.

¹⁹ Wilhelm Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion – Facts and Theories*, (London: 1931) p. 131, (translated by HJ Rose)

²⁰ Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion* (London: Longmans Green, 1909) pp. 175-182, 196

The information supplied to Lang came from the older members of the community who were not acquainted with other peoples at that time. As Lang says, “...foreign influence seems to have been more than usually excluded (in their concept of God).”²¹

Samuel Zwemer spoke of the monotheistic character of the Bushmen, as well as many peoples of the Arctic cultures which he maintained is “Clear...even to a cursory examination.”²² In his paper he was not merely reiterating what others have observed, namely, that all these primitive peoples have knowledge of One Supreme God, but rather that the Supreme God whom they recognise is essentially the same figure with the same attributes. Canon Titcombe noted that when speaking of the Zulus, quoting a former Bishop of Natal who had a firsthand knowledge of the Zulus while they were still culturally intact, as stating that they had no idols but rather acknowledged One Supreme Being who was known as *The Great One, The All-Mighty, The First* etc.²³ Titcombe also noted the concept of One God amongst the Madagascan natives.²⁴

²¹ Ibid, p. 196

²² Samuel Zwemer, “*The Origin of Religion – By Evolution or by Revelation*,” (Trans. Vict. Institute, Volume 67; 1937) p. 189

²³ J.H. Titcombe, “*Prehistoric Monotheism*,” (Trans. Vict. Institute, Vol. 8, 1937) p. 145

²⁴ Ibid, p. 144

All of this evidence led Paul Radin to conclude, after mentioning Lang's work: **"his intuitive insight has been abundantly corroborated."**²⁵ Moreover, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* published a paper by E.O. James in which he concluded: **"Thus, it is impossible to maintain a unilateral (one sided and single) evolution in religious thought and practice as suggested by the rationalists Frazer, Tylor and Comte's '*Three Stages*.' Nevertheless, neither the speculation that the idea of God arose in ancestor worship as revived by Herbert Spencer, nor the Frazerian evolution model of polytheism and animism to monotheism can be reconciled with the One Supreme tribal God which is a recurrent feature of the primitive concept of God."**²⁶

²⁵ Paul Radin, *Primitive Men as Philosophers* (New York: 1956) p. 346

²⁶ E.O. James, "Religion and Reality," in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (Vol. 79, 1950) p. 28

The degeneration of monotheism can be seen in Buddhism which began in the 6th century as a reform movement within Hinduism. Later on however, gigantic colossal statues and images of the Buddha were erected and surrounded by flowers, incense etc. Buddhists further performed a number of rituals to these statues that include prostrating and bowing. In addition the Dalai Lama of Tibet is worshiped as a man-god, with his devotees prostrating to him. This is also observable in the Naqshabandandee Soofee world movement with their current leader Naazim Qubrusee and also other ‘miracle workers’ such as Sai Baba and ‘Ayatollah’ Khomaynee. All of these men are worshiped besides Allaah and demonstrate the degeneration of monotheism into polytheism.